DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 345 881 PS 020 639

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TITLE Environments that Make a Difference. SHAPES.
INSTITUTION Texas Tech Univ., Lubbock. Inst. for Child and Family Studies.
SPONS AGENCY South Plains Community Action Association, Lubbock, TX.; Texas State Dept. of Human Services, Austin.
PUB DATE 91
CONTRACT 0202
NOTE 69p.; For other books in this five-book series, see PS 020 636-640.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Art Activities; Books; Check Lists; Class Activities; *Classroom Design; *Classroom Environment; *Day Care Centers; Dramatic Play; Early Childhood Education; *Facility Improvement; *Learning Centers (Classroom); Playground Activities; *Playgrounds; Toys
IDENTIFIERS Blocks; SandPlay

ABSTRACT

SHAPES--an acronym for the South Plains Child Care Management Services (SpCCMS) Helping, Assisting and Preparing Educators and Staff--is also the name of a preschool readiness curriculum that is being developed for use by administrators and teachers. The first phase of the curriculum development consists of the publication of five books to be used in training teaching staff. The present text is the fourth book in the series. This book is a guide for developing the physical environment of a day care center. It provides suggestions for furnishing classrooms and designing playgrounds, and summarizes the properties of learning center environments. Chapter 1 discusses the updating of indoor environments. Chapters 2 through 7 offer suggestions on arranging classroom areas for: (1) block play; (2) housekeeping or dramatic play; (3) library activities, including reading, listening, and writing; (4) art activities; (5) playing with table toys; and (6) sand and water play. Chapter 8 describes several methods of rotating children through classroom learning centers. Ways to save money when furnishing and maintaining learning centers, and ways to keep learning centers interesting, are suggested in Chapter 9. Chapter 10 discusses playground improvement. The chapter includes a playground maintenance checklist and pictures that illustrate various playground activities. (BC)

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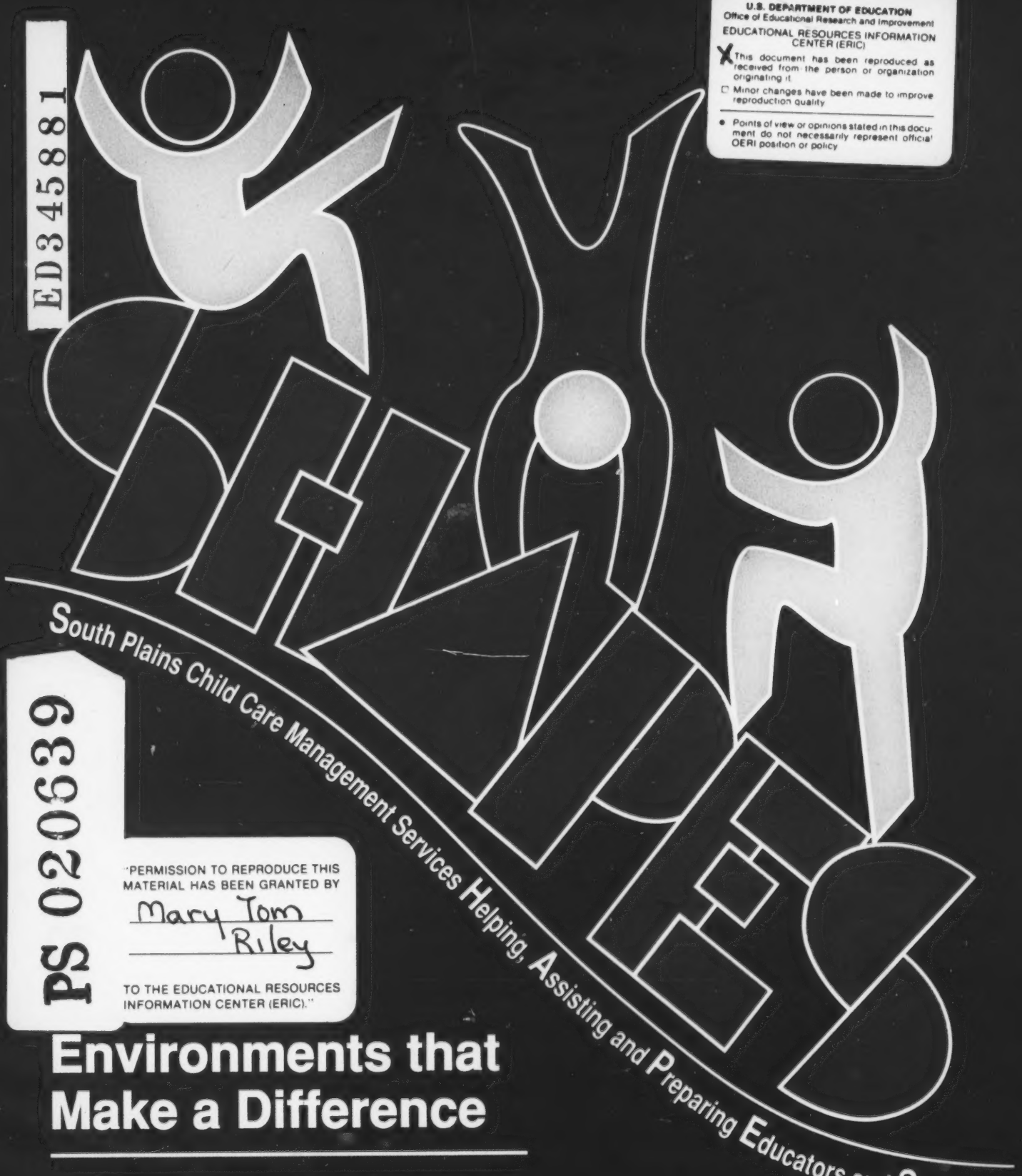

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Environments that Make a Difference

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SHAPES

ENVIRONMENTS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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Summer 1991

This publication was prepared pursuant to contract number 0202 between Texas Department of Human Services and South Plains Community Action Association. Contractors undertaking such projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgment in professional and technical matters. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Texas Department of Human Services or South Plains Community Action Association position or policy.

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PREFACE

SHAPES is an acronym for the **S**outh Plains Child Care Management Services (SpCCMS) **H**elping, **A**ssisting and **P**reparing **E**ducators and **S**taff. The SHAPES acronym also names this preschool readiness curriculum, which is being developed annually in phases for use by administrators and teachers. Phase I consists of five books to be used in the training of the teaching staff. It can be used by the teachers for referencing appropriate child care practices and curriculum and for developing the first six weeks of lesson plans.

Environments That Make a Difference is number four in the five-book series. This book is a guide to center development, both inside and outside. It provides many suggestions for furnishing a classroom and designing a playground. *Environments* summarizes the essential properties of a working-learning center environment.

SHAPES curriculum books published for Phase I include not only *Environments That Make a Difference* but four others: *A Quick Study: Child Growth and Development Handbook; Guidance Concerning Minimum Standards; A Beginning Curriculum: The First Six Weeks;* and *Training with the Trainer's Manual.*

Acknowledgments

Authorship of a curriculum is only one aspect of the total development of such a publication. Commitment, support and contributions made by individuals actively involved in the SHAPES curriculum development make the result a product of teamwork.

Connie Hindman, Child Development Specialist, Texas Department of Human Services; Landereth Freeman, Director, South Plains Child Care Management Services; Bill Powell, Deputy Director, South Plains Community Action Association, Incorporated; and staff members acted as an executive committee providing ideas, identifying needs and correcting oversights to improve the SHAPES curriculum and teacher training. I express my deep appreciation for their generosity of time, thoughts and goodwill.

Amanda Smith served as the SHAPES project coordinator. Through her tireless efforts, the manuscripts were edited, and typed, and the layout and artwork evolved. She was also the executive editor for the project. I am especially grateful for her professional interest and loyalty to the SHAPES publication.

I want to thank Deborah Cunningham for the final edit of manuscript, and Sheri Lokken, Misty Dolan and Nancy Scott for the pages of typed manuscript. Dawn Jones, graphic designer, contributed greatly to the publication with her artwork.

An education committee of early childhood professionals contributed greatly through critiques and ideas they presented during the development of the curriculum. The table of contents, general format and final copy were field-edited by a group of highly dedicated and influential early childhood educators and administrators from the South Plains of Texas. Thanks to each of you for your commitment to young children and to this project.

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Environments Make The Difference

Is the room appealing?

Are the colors harmonizing?

Do the children feel comfortable here?

Is it orderly and neat but not too plain or stark?

Is it stimulating but not overpowering?

Should we plan for outdoor waterplay?

Can we save money on our next equipment purchase?

CHAPTER 1

Is Your Indoor Environment Updated or Outdated?

Is your children's center updated or outdated? Occasionally, teachers have an opportunity to design a children's center from the start. More often, they join the staff of an ongoing operation. In either case, with good management and vision, all centers can appear up-to-date rather than outdated. One of the best practices in center development is to take all furnishings and wall decorations out of rooms annually and start again. We may not be able to change bricks and mortar, but we certainly can rethink and update our present arrangements.

Better still, treat your center as if it were in the final building stages and think through the present existence until you can envision updated room arrangements, color schemes, floor coverings, light and ventilation and the general surroundings. Now take note of such unchangeable items as the location of doors and light plugs, and examine how these "givens" affect the way things ultimately are arranged in the room. In many instances, some wall relocations, door changes, minor additions of electrical outlets and new petitions are not so cost prohibitive as to be unthinkable.

Next, think about the traffic patterns. Can furniture be arranged to provide unimpeded pathways to the "go-home" door, bathrooms, and outdoor play areas? Can the furniture be used as buffers and dividers to prevent undesirable patterns from developing so that block and book corners and the dramatic play area are protected from unnecessary intrusions?

Noise levels must be considered, too. It is wisest to separate areas from each other if possible. For example, if carpentry cannot be done outside, consider placing it at the end of the room, out of the major traffic and where surroundings will partially prevent the sound of hammering from rocketing through the school. Consider also whether it might be possible to use part of the hall for this purpose, since a teacher must devote her undivided attention to it anyway.

Quiet areas must be created to balance the more noisy, high-activity ones. Consider how tiring it is even for an adult to be in the constant company of other people. Although we think of children as generally seeking the company of other children, it is equally exhausting for them to endure the continual stimulation and adjustments from constant contact with other people. Children need quiet secluded places to which they can withdraw when they have had enough contact. Such arrangements may vary from a comfortable sofa with books nearby to a specially arranged cubby where children snuggle down in a mass of pillows.

Finally, think about the many various activities you want to include and where these would be most sensibly placed. Take into consideration the room arrangements that can be changed and those that definitely must stay the way they are. Remember also to place activity areas with an eye to the accessibility of storage, the level of illumination needed, and the desirability of distributing activities throughout the room. Leave some open spaces so that activities and children can spread out as needed.

Now that the functional aspects of the arrangement have been considered, it is time to consider the aesthetic aspects of the environment. A room should be beautiful and appealing, as well as practical. Purchasing or making well-designed basic furniture and equipment certainly is important in accomplishing these objectives. Using harmonious colors and including a variety of textures continues the blended and artistic appeal.

Bulletin boards and teachers go together! A great deal of emphasis is usually placed on the bulletin board. Bulletin boards or exhibit areas should have a primary purpose of displaying children's work. Material on such boards should be placed low enough that the children can see it easily. It is really essential to get right down to the children's height when planning wall arrangements and take a look at them from the children's perspective.

Other aspects considered by E. Jones in *Dimensions of Teaching-Learning Environments: Handbook for Teachers* (1977), and E. Jones and Prescott in *Dimensions of Teaching-Learning Environments II: Focus on Day Care* (1978) are the hardness-softness dimensions in the school environment. Softness should surely be a part of the aesthetics of the center. Cozy furniture, carpentry, rocking chairs, and laps all fall into this category, as do play dough, animals, and scrap sewings. These might all be thought of as simply "soft to touch," but the authors define their common quality in a different way. They describe a "soft" environment as one that is sensorily responsive. For example, a playground with grass, sand, and tires to bounce on is more sensorily responsive than is an asphalt one with metal play equipment. "Softness" can become a key element in achieving a harmonious and aesthetically pleasing look, creating an overall effect that is homey and comfortable – "soft" in every sense of the word. To assure a matter-of-fact representation of softness throughout the school, children's comfort zones must be closely observed prior to final planning.

Multiethnic pictures, books and artifacts contribute to the children's overall feelings of being valued for their own cultural richness. When these items are subtly placed, they also contribute to the feeling of homeyness and comfort.

Typical activity areas commonly included indoors are:

- Blocks Area
- Story Area
- Housekeeping Area
- Art Area
- Tabletop Activities Area
- Sand and Water Play Area

Try to plan for an activity exploration area that varies with the current focus of interest. Better still, create a backdrop and/or bulletin board to highlight this area with special effects that denote the theme or special concept being studied. Many areas in the children's center serve more than one purpose during the day. Most full-day centers must use all available floor space for cots and mats at nap time. Carpeted areas, such as the block area, readily convert to a comfortable group-time spot.

Arrange and rearrange for effective results! One of the best ways to see if your planning has achieved the goal for appropriate room arrangement is to quietly observe all activities for several days. If the traffic pattern and interest areas do not meet your expectations, tackle the arrangement again. As the best of interior decorators change items and replace others, so do the architects of great children centers.

To evaluate the environment, you must be able to competently answer the question: *Will this arrangement help children be competent and successful?* Accomplishing the goal implied by this question might involve something as simple as placing a row of tires as a barrier between the tricycle activity and the sand box area so that riders need not continually be reprimanded for intruding on the digger's space, thereby preserving the self-esteem of all. Many other simple changes can readily improve the environment for harmonious learning.

Orderliness, cleanliness and general maintenance may appear to be mundane aspects of the environmental picture. Quite the contrary, the daily impression of the overall physical environment is of great significance. Days at a center move at a quick and ever-changing pace, which makes it difficult, though not impossible, to keep things looking fresh and well-maintained. Cleanliness is readily appreciated by experienced visitors who have all too often come across schools with sticky chairs, smudged blocks, and grubby puzzles.

Materials should not only be plentiful and appealing, but kept in very good condition, or discarded. They should be mended when possible. When materials are plentiful, children understand they need not pinch and scramble for their share, encouraging them to be more generous. When materials are changed regularly, the children find that school is a varied and challenging place. When items are complete, stored properly and generally well-cared for, children learn to take care also. Expose children to beauty and order, and they will develop a taste for quality.

The ambiance of the school is dependent upon the careful arrangement of the physical setting. The overall effect of the school is dependent on the multifaceted elements that say "I care!" Both tangibles and intangibles create the glowing ambiance desired for appropriate child care. A radiant staff, colorful but not garish walls, blooming flowers on the window sill; a fabulous children's art exhibit; a padded children's sofa in the housekeeping area and a rocker waiting in the corner might start the list of what gives the child development center that homey look.

Is your center updated? If you are contemplating improvements to meet new standards of aesthetic and functional appeal, you will find the next few pages of guidelines helpful.

Center Environment Essentials

For SHAPES to be successfully implemented, it is essential that the majority of the suggestions be used in furnishing the classroom. Basic early childhood models have been researched thoroughly. The best practices for basic operations are presented in *A Beginning Curriculum: The First Six Weeks*. The essential equipment, furniture, and materials for the six basic learning centers are discussed in the next chapters. The goal is to design an environment that fosters a sense of well-being and encourages creativity from the first day children attend. Updating is absolutely necessary to ensure opportunities for the successful growth and development of children.

CHAPTER 2

How to Arrange a Block Center

It is very important to give careful planning and attention to the size and location of the block center. A clearly defined space for block play makes block-building more fun and is therefore an absolute necessity. Block play requires a large play area. The area should be large enough for children to be able to spread out their blocks. A small block area causes children to quarrel over the limited space. Because children typically build with unit blocks on the floor, there is no need for tables in this area.

The block area is a part of the classroom set-up. Situating the block area next to the housekeeping area is a good idea as both are usually full of active play and noise.

Enclose the block area on all three sides for best results. This reduces accidents and leaves children free from worry that someone will interrupt their play or destroy their work. The semi-contained area reduces distraction and wandering of children into the other areas. Enclosure of the area promotes secure feelings among small children. Locating the blocks in the corner of the room has many advantages. Furniture arrangements or taped lines on the floor can also define boundaries. Soft, durable, easy-to-clean carpet can reduce noise and afford the "soft touch" needed in all centers. Thick pile or shag rugs should not be used because blocks topple over too easily. A good indoor/outdoor carpet is comfortable and makes a good surface for block building.

How to Arrange Blocks on Display

- Blocks should be stored on shelves at children'seye level.
- Blocks must be grouped together according to size.
- Block storage areas can be labeled by using the exact size of the block to demonstrate where the block should be shelved.
- Stand-up block's outline can be painted on the back of shelf.
- Block labels should be grouped by size and shape.

- Unit block's labels should be placed on the shelf lengthwise.
- Labeling encourages easy and rapid clean up; teaches children appropriate care of equipment.
- Clean-up becomes a time for children to practice their matching skills.
- Place Lego's and table blocks in the table toys area.
- Due to the large size of hollow blocks, they are usually left in the dramatic play area.

What are Some Accessories and Props for Block Play?

Blocks are often the beginning constructions for dramatic play settings. A large assembly of accessories and props stimulate play beyond the familiar building towers and laying roads with blocks.

A wide assortment of additional props can result in the block area becoming one of the best areas for dramatic play. The list of props might include the following items.

- Popsicle sticks
- tiles, linoleum squares, rugs
- pulleys and string
- magazine pictures of buildings, roads, bridges
- shells and pebbles
- thin pieces of rubber tubing
- a dollhouse with furniture and dolls
- traffic signs
- gas pumps
- paper, crayons, and scissors
- hats
- trees
- toy carpentry tools
- castle blocks
- play money
- small containers

Props and accessories must have a highly visible storage area. Group the like objects together and mark the shelf area with the objects' silhouette. Plastic basins or sturdy cardboard boxes also marked with pictures of the object to be stored may be placed on the block shelves.

How to Keep the Block Area Safe and Clean

- Limit the number of children using the block center at a time, based on the size of the area.
- Be certain teachers have a full view of the block area.
- Arrange traffic pattern for easy accessibility.
- Establish clear rules: Blocks cannot be thrown.
  Blocks must stay in the area.
  A child may tear down his own building but must not disturb someone else's.

Remember, the component parts create the whole picture of a beautiful children's center. Caring for the blocks is one of the important tasks for teachers.

- Wash dirty blocks with oil soap; scrub with a stiff brush and rinse with water.
- Sand periodically to eliminate rough edges. Use commercial wood polish or linseed oil for a protective coating.

What Styles of Unit Blocks Do Children Enjoy?

Toy shapes and preschool educational catalogs list most of these favorite styles of unit blocks:

Square of Half-Unit

Unit

Double Unit

Quadruple Unit

Pillar

Half-Pillar

Small Triangle

Large Triangle

Small Column or Cylinder

Large Column or Cylinder

Small Switch

Large Buttress

Unit Arch and Half-Circle

Half Roman Arch

Small Buttress

Large Switch

Gothic Door

Ellipse

Curve

Quarter-Circle

Ramp

Intersection

Side Road

Roof Boards

CHAPTER 3

How to Arrange the Housekeeping Area

Housekeeping areas are often referred to as dramatic play areas, as they are designed for role playing and acting out of daily life situations. Children's response to the housekeeping area is much dependent upon its arrangement and content. Design for this learning center should consider the facets listed below.

Noise Factor

- Locate the housekeeping area next to blocks or other noisy area.
- Blocks and dramatic play extend into one another well.

Play Areas

- "Cozy" subdivisions are desirable.
- Loft areas are conducive to privacy and make a neat space division.
- Separate the kitchen area from the living area to create a realistic environment.

Three Sides Enclosed

- Gives secluded effect for dramatic play.
- Makes wonderful corners.
- Simplifies keeping up with accessories.
- Better organizes clean-up time.
- Arrange furniture to enclose area.
- Shelving can be used for dividers.

Some Things to Remember About Getting Ready for Children to Play House

- Subdivisions can be for familiar areas, such as living room, bedroom, kitchen.
- Cover part of the wall with wallpaper.
- Hang a curtain on a make-believe window.
- Place an inexpensive rug on the floor.
- Additional furniture can be made or found in garage sales (couch and chairs, sturdy cardboard furniture painted with nontoxic paints can be adorable and playable)
- Be sure to have natural ethnic backgrounds for children from various races.

- Basic props:
  - male and female ethnic dolls
  - clock
  - telephone
  - blankets for dolls
  - empty food containers and boxes
  - plastic food
  - doll bed
  - doll highchair
  - rocking chair
  - full-length, nonbreakable mirror
  - ironing board and iron
- Dress-up clothes:
  - jackets, skirts, dresses, shirts—for both boys and girls
  - shoes and boots
  - ties and scarves
  - costume jewelry
  - hats and wigs (unless prohibited by local licensing requirements)
  - suitcases, pocketbooks, briefcases, wallets, keys
- Kitchen:
  - stove and refrigerator
  - child-size table and chairs
  - pots and pans in various sizes
  - eating utensils
  - cooking utensils, including serving spoons, ladles, sifters, colanders, etc.
  - dish towels
  - dishes—plates, cups, saucers, and bowls
  - tea kettle or coffee pot
  - clean-up materials—broom, mop, sponges

New Interest Centers Established in the Housekeeping Area

The housekeeping area can be converted into many different types of settings. Teachers may wish to periodically convert one part of the house corner into a different type of setting, such as a supermarket, a laundromat, or an office. Teachers may also wish to incorporate other settings into existing areas through the use of prop boxes. As their name suggests, prop boxes are boxes filled with materials relevant to a particular theme. A "hospital" prop box, for example, could be a box filled with bandages, stethescopes, white "lab" jackets, black bags, pill bottles, hot water bottles, white sheets, and other medical-related paraphernalia. Therefore, the prop

box is a way of instantly converting the housekeeping area into a hospital or another setting for dramatic play.

Most of the time, teachers like to let children set up some other interest areas to complement a new theme or concept being developed in the curriculum. If space is available for a special theme center, use it for this separate area of interest. Actually, many teachers do incorporate aspects for new themes successfully in a center. The choice is yours concerning how to best utilize your facilities and accessories.

Some of the following extra learning centers seem to complement learning by providing high interest surroundings. Ethnic artifacts and cultural objects added from the beginning or at seasonal times enhance the centers' effectiveness.

- **Barbershop/hairdresser.** The hairdresser's shop is another setting enjoyed by children. It should be equipped with the following:
  - combs and brushes
  - empty shampoo bottles with the labels still on
  - curlers and pins
  - sheets cut into smocks
  - hand and table mirrors
  - hat-style hair dryer (electric cord removed)
  - hand-held dryer (electric cord removed)
  - towels
  - basins

- **Shoe store.** The shoe store is another popular theme for dramatic play. Props for a shoe store can be quite simple:
  - chairs
  - shoes—men's and women's, boys' and girls'
  - shoe boxes
  - shoe-shine kit with clear polish and rags
  - box with a shoe-shaped wedge cut out of wood
  - ruler to measure feet
  - cash register with play money

- **Supermarket.** Children often accompany their parents food shopping. Hence, the supermarket theme evolves quite naturally in the housekeeping area. To set up a supermarket, the following props and materials can be used:
  - table or crates to create sections of the supermarket
  - shopping baskets made from cartons with a string for pulling or a dowel for pushing

- signs for different sections– meat, dairy, fruits and vegetables (signs should be in two languages in bilingual centers)
- plastic fruits and vegetables
- empty containers of food
- cash registers made from cardboard boxes
- play money
- paper bags for groceries

- **Laundromat.** Clothes in the housekeeping area get "dirty," and children will note the need to wash, dry, and iron their clothing. A laundromat or cleaners to which children can take clothes for cleaning is therefore a natural extension of house play. The following are suggestions for setting up a laundromat:

  - A large cardboard carton can become a washing machine with a door cut out in front for loading the clothes. Dials can be drawn, or knobs that really turn can be put on the carton.
  - Similarly, a dryer can be made from another carton.
  - A table for folding clothes can be borrowed from the table toy area.
  - An ironing board and iron may already be in the housekeeping area.
  - Chairs should be included for patrons to sit on while the laundry is in the machines.

- **Garage/repair shop.** Young children are often fascinated by the workings of machinery. Cars in particular hold a great deal of interest for children. A garage setting provides children with an opportunity for dramatic play while at the same time allowing them to work on motor skills development. A garage can be set up by undertaking the suggestions that follow.

  - Cars can be made from cardboard or wooden crates, and features such as a real license plate, a steering wheel, and knobs and dials can be added.
  - A gas pump can be created from a box with a hose attached.
  - A shoe box, four empty juice cans, and a wooden stick can be used to make a car engine. Holes can be cut in the carton that are large enough for each juice can and the stick to jut through. The juice cans can be moved up and down like the pistons in an engine. The stick can be used for checking the oil.
  - Traffic signs can be designed from cardboard and wooden dowels.

- **Office.** An office workplace is another natural extension of house play. To create an office area, teachers can assemble the following props:
  - pads of paper
  - stapler
  - paper clips
  - old typewriter
  - old adding machine or calculator
  - telephone
  - pencils, pens, and markers
  - stamp pad and stampers
  - briefcase
- **Space.** The thought of space travel is exciting to most children. Here are some ideas for arranging a place and materials for this theme.
  - Make a rocket from several cartons piled on top of each other. The bottom one should be big enough to hold two children. Cut a door in the bottom carton so the children can get in and out. Put knobs inside, and include pictures of space scenes.
  - Space costumes can be made using helmets with plastic or paper visors. The hose from a hair dryer can be used as an oxygen tube. Overalls with straps can be turned into spacesuits.
  - The play area can be decorated with pictures of stars, the moon, the planets, and satellite pictures of earth as seen from outer space.
  - The car from the garage theme can become a "moon buggy" in this locale.
  - A telescope can be made from an aluminum foil or paper towel roll.

Tips for Labeling and Displaying Props

- Use visual labels of the objects, shapes or sizes painted or pasted on the shelves.
- Hang pegboards with silhouettes of sizes painted accordingly.
- Install hooks for hats and bags.
- Place shoe racks on the floor or on shelves.
- Pull in a hanging rack (child-size) or shortened hat rack for hanging up costumes.
- Maintain orderly storage shelves for other items.

CHAPTER 4

How to Arrange the Library Area

Library areas should appear inviting, interesting and stimulating with a real homey and cozy effect on all. One should feel drawn to the area to relax and learn. Some centers refer to this ideal learning center as the storytelling area and others as the pre-reading area. Three distinct areas usually provided, the book area, the listening center, and the writing area, are described.

The Book Area

Children who grow up to enjoy reading are those who have learned early in life to enjoy books. By creating an atmosphere in which children learn to love books, preschool teachers can lay the foundation for lifelong reading pleasure. How do teachers set up the book area so that children receive a positive message? Here are some ideas.

- Furnish the area with soft chairs and pillows. Comfortable furniture conveys the idea that this is a space for relaxing. When they are offered overstuffed chairs or large pillows, children start to associate books and reading with comfort and pleasure. A rug on the floor, a beanbag chair, a rocking chair, or even a mattress covered with an attractive piece of fabric can help create a warm, cozy environment.
- Include a table and chairs in the area. Some children prefer to look at books while sitting at a table. A brightly colored tablecloth or a plant on the table can make this area even warmer.
- Decorate the walls of the area with pictures. Book jackets, photos of children and adults reading, and children's artwork can all make this area more inviting.
- Light the area well. Children shouldn't have to strain their eyes. Natural light, if possible, is always best. A standing lamp or an overhead fixture can provide additional lighting, if needed.
- Display books attractively. Because children can't read the title on a book's spine, they need to see its front cover in order to recognize it. Books should, therefore, be free-standing on shelves at the children's eye level. They should be arranged in an attractive manner that invites children to the shelves to pick up a book to read.

The Listening Center

Like the book area, the listening center should be arranged to create an inviting atmosphere. Here, children need to be able to select a tape and know how to play it. They should be able to sit comfortably alone or in groups. They also need to have easy access to the materials located here and to feel free to pick them up and use them at their leisure. The same suggestions for using materials in the book area apply here, too. Specifically, there should be:

- comfortable places for sitting (beanbag chairs, overstuffed sofas and chairs, a mattress, rugs, and so on);
- table space for children who prefer a "library" setting;
- decorated walls;
- plants; and
- shelf space to store tapes so children can use them independently.

Select tapes that are:

- short, since children's attention spans are limited;
- lively in their presentation, since nothing is more boring that listening to a dry, monotonous voice;
- technically well-produced, without static and hisses;
- nonsexist and nonracist in content; and
- narrated by both men and women.

Music is enjoyable and soothing to children, and it evokes feelings and provides an emotional outlet for them. Many concepts can be introduced effectively through music as children respond to rhythm and melodies. Allowing children to listen to different kinds of music builds appreciation.

The Writing Center

The writing center, unlike the other areas in the library corner, should suggest slightly more activity and less quiet time than either the book area or the listening center. Children in this area are constantly engaged in doing something. The focal point of the writing area should be a "work table" on which children can use writing materials, a typewriter, or even a computer. (If a computer is used, teachers will have to be careful, in setting up this area, to locate the table near an outlet, making sure that the cord is not placed anywhere near lines of traffic. As always, safety plates should be over any exposed outlets.)

Equipping the writing center is a process of gathering together relevant supplies and equipment and making sure they are accessible to the children. The following is a list of suggested material.

Writing tools:
- thick pencils – black lead and colored,
- markers – thick and thin, water-based,
- chalk and chalkboards,
- wooden "pencils" and magic slates, and
- crayons

Printing tools:
- letter and design stencils
- alphabet-letter stamps and ink pads

Paper:
- computer printout paper
- magazines
- index cards
- envelopes and stationery
- unlined and lined paper
- construction paper
- carbon paper

Other tools:
- hole punch
- stapler
- scissors
- paper clips
- pencil sharpener

Equipment:
- typewriter
- easel with lined paper
- personal computer with word-processing software (optional)

Keep the library in good condition by repairing books immediately. Keep a repair kit handy that has the following necessary tools and materials to do the job:

- transparent tape to repair torn pages,
- cloth tape to repair the spines of books,
- gum erasers to remove pencil marks,
- white-out to cover ink and crayon marks, and
- a pair of scissors.

Artistic display of materials is always important. However, in the library work to promote visibility in displaying books, tapes, and materials. Place the most used items conveniently in the most used areas.

CHAPTER 5

How to Arrange an Art Area

Art areas should be designed with exceptional appeal. If the area has an interesting entrance, the children will want to become involved with a project. According to research, messy and overcrowded art areas discourage and repulse children. The area should be used to exhibit some of the children's most recent work. While arranging the art area, teachers should make certain physical provisions.

- **The art area should be out of the line of traffic**. Such arrangement promotes independent work, and it also reduces the chances that a child will trip over an easel or get accidentally painted.

- **The art area should have enough space for children to work comfortably**. If possible, children should have the options of working at easels, at a table, and sometimes on the floor. The area should be large enough to accommodate a table on which activities that require room, such as finger painting, can take place.

- **The art area should be near a source of water**. Because painting and many other art activities need water both during use and for clean up, try to locate the art area close to a water supply. If this is not possible, buckets of water can be brought to the art area.

Suggested Materials for the Art Area

Art materials can be as diverse as creativity and funds allow. Glitter, styrofoam, and feathers, to name just a few materials, spark children's imaginations and enhance their artwork. Before gathering exotic or highly challenging materials such as these, teachers should first stock the art area with the following basics:

- something to paint on (an easel with paper);
- something to paint with (brushes, paints);
- something to draw with (crayons, markers, pencils);
- something to draw on (a variety of paper);
- something that holds things together (paste or glue);
- something that cuts (scissors);
- something to mold (clay, play dough); and of course,
- something to clean up with (mops, sponges, brooms, towels).

Basic Art Supplies

Paints in Many Colors

- powdered tempera
- liquid tempera (already mixed)
- water-based paint
- finger paint
- paintbrushes

Pencils and Pens

- fat pencils
- pens with a broad surface

Crayons

- variety of colors
- large and small
- good quality so that color is clear and even

Chalk

- white
- colored
- chalkboard(s)

Scissors

- safety scissors for three-year-olds
- right- and left-handed scissors
- training scissors

Markers

- variety of colors
- water-based

Clay and Play Dough

- homemade or purchased
- clay that can be baked/hardened and painted
- clay that remains soft
- tools such as cookie cutters, plastic knives, rolling pins, and objects that make impressions

Paper

- newsprint
- construction paper in a variety of colors
- drawing paper
- sandpaper
- wrapping paper
- egg separators
- wallpaper samples
- styrofoam packing pieces
- butcher paper
- posterboard or tagboard

Paste and Glue

- paste for materials such as paper, fabrics, wood, and cardboard
- glue sticks
- rubber cement

Clean-Up Materials

- mop
- sponges
- paper towels
- plastic tablecloth
- broom
- smocks for children

Suggested Supplemental Art Supplies

Natural Items

- acorns
- driftwood
- feathers
- dried flowers
- pine cones
- seashells
- seeds
- stones or pebbles

Sewing Items

- beads
- braid
- buttons
- cotton balls
- ribbon
- shoelaces
- snaps
- spools
- yarn
- large plastic needles

Fabrics (any size scraps)

- acetate
- burlap
- canvas
- cotton
- felt
- fur
- old gloves
- old socks

Building Materials (any size scraps)

- linoleum
- masonite
- metal pieces
- nails
- tiles
- wallboard
- wire
- wire mesh
- wood

Paper (any size pieces)

- cardboard
- cartons
- newspaper
- sandpaper
- tissue paper
- wallpaper
- wrapping paper
- computer paper
- cardboard tubes

Miscellaneous

- containers of any kind (e.g., baby food jars, margarine tubs)
- clock parts
- pipe cleaners
- styrofoam or other packing materials
- tongue depressors
- wooden beads
- wooden dowels
- shoe boxes
- glitter
- stamp pads and stamps
- marbles
- paint rollers
- large brushes
- large and small plastic and metal paper clips

Kitchen/Laundry Items

- aluminum foil
- beans
- bottle tops
- candles
- cellophane and wax paper
- corks
- egg cartons
- grocery packages
- juice cans
- macaroni (can be dyed with food coloring and alcohol)
- milk containers
- paper bags
- paper cups
- paper plates
- paper doilies
- paper towels
- Popsicle sticks
- string/rope
- tin cans
- toothpicks
- coffee cans

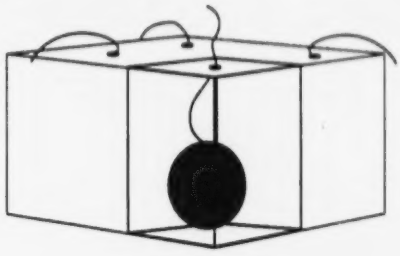
Have a System for Storing Art Supplies

1. Keep shelves orderly.
2. Separate and sort materials carefully.
3. Label all material shelves.

A Few Storage Tips

- Use egg cartons for storing scissors (turn upside down and stick scissors through the egg compartment).
- Ice cream containers make good paper holders.
- Ice cream containers or coffee cans make good storage for small items.

- Keep clay in airtight containers like plastic jars with lids or plastic zip-lock sacks.
- Six-pack beverage containers can be converted to paint caddies. Orange juice cans fit nicely.
- Baby food jars are good glue and paste containers.
- Frozen juice cans are good for crayon holders.
- A yarn dispenser is easily made from a cardboard box with corrugated dividers. Punch a hole in the top of the box over each space and draw the yarn through for easy dispensing.



- Store materials out of reach of children, when necessary.
- Plastic see-through boxes are great for further storage of items.

CHAPTER 6

How to Arrange a Toy Table Area

In setting up a classroom area for table toys, it is important to create an environment in which children can concentrate on the toys with as few outside distractions as possible.

If space or furniture is at a premium, teachers can use rug scraps or tape to define individual floor space where children can play with the toys. More important than the furnishings are that the area be enclosed and that the space be defined. To further aid children's concentration, the table toy area should be located next to other quiet areas, such as the library or art areas.

The display of table toys in adequate shelving systems can help define the toy table area.

Here are some general guidelines for displaying table toys.

- Place toys on shelves at children's eye level so that the children can readily see what materials are available.
- Group toys by type: puzzles in one area, pegboards in another area, and so on.
- Remove from the shelves any broken toys or ones with missing pieces.
- Extra toys (for replenishing the area) should be stored outside the table toy area.
- To maximize storage space, bins or plastic tubes are good for collectibles, Legos, table blocks and other toys with multiple pieces. The boxes that many toys come in are often too flimsy for long term use and are not of a uniform size, which makes them hard to stack on the shelves.

The Basic Types of Toys for Table Play

- **Puzzles**. This traditional staple of the table toy area includes wood inserts, rubber inserts, and large-pieced cardboard puzzles. Also included in this category are structured materials, such as cylinders that fit into holes and spools that fit on poles. Puzzles are important in that they provide children with an opportunity to work on physical and intellectual skills at the same time.
- **Cooperative games.** The type of toy included in this category is one that depends on matching. Children are encouraged to match pictures, numbers, symbols, and objects – not to win or lose. Games included in this category include lotto, dominoes, and memory and matching games. Cooperative games provide children with the opportunity to improve their powers of discrimination while developing social skills.
- **Building toys.** Table blocks and Legos are popular toys in the table toy area. They can be used for stacking, building, and constructing intricate structures. Building toys provide children with an opportunity to develop fine motor skills, eye-hand coordination, and social skills. They are especially helpful in teaching basic math concepts.
- **Sorting and categorizing games.** Button boxes and other sets of collectibles are used in the table toy area for sorting and categorizing by attributes of size, shape, color, and so on. Sorting games enable children to think up their own ideas for classifying objects and to be creative.
- **Patterning toys.** Pegboards, cube blocks, stringing beads, and parquetry blocks can all be used to copy or create designs. These materials promote fine motor skills and develop powers of observation and directionality.
- **Manipulative toys.** Manipulative toys are characteristically three-dimensional in design. They can be picked up and held in the hand, and they offer considerable variety, ranging from flat puzzles to board games. Chief among manipulatives are patterning toys such as stringing beads and pegboards. Manipulative table toys are chiefly used in helping children refine their small motor skills and develop improved eye-hand coordination.
- **Toys for dramatic play.** Included in this category are toys that can be used creatively by children in performing dramatic play scenarios. Typical toys include Legos for use in building prop settings, dollhouse furniture, and collectibles such as marbles and shells that can be used to represent a variety of imaginary objects. Toys for dramatic play enhance children's imaginative powers.

Popular Homemade Toys

Cost is usually a prime consideration in selecting materials for the table toy area. Most teachers want to have a wide variety of table toys available to children at all times, yet few program budgets provide for this variety. One viable option is to supplement the table toy area with homemade toys and games. Homemade toys are not only cheaper, but also are able to be customized. They can be designed to reinforce specific concepts or topics. A lotto game, for example, can be used to illustrate objects seen on a trip. By making the toys themselves, teachers can design materials that are tailored to the learning objectives they have targeted for children.

These are a few homemade types of play materials commonly used.

- Lotto games,
- puzzles,
- shoe boxes for sorting games,
- self-help boards, and
- topic flip books.

Lamination and dry mounting facilitate both making new toys and caring for them.

CHAPTER 7

How to Arrange Sand & Water Area

Although many teachers plan to have sand and water play outdoors if weather permits, it is a good idea to have a special area for water and sand inside during winter in colder climates. Playing with water and sand is a very important sensory activity.

- Children enjoy and learn from sand and water play. Including this area in the classroom provides more exposure time for their activities.
- Younger children and/or children who have limited experience with sand and water play are more comfortable in a controlled indoor environment.
- Water play can usually be arranged closer to sand play in an indoor environment than in an outdoor environment. This allows teachers to more thoughtfully plan learning activities.
- Some children prefer one medium over the other; indoors, they have ready access to both.
- Both sand and water are natural materials that are soothing and that encourage similar types of play.
- Some children may have a desire on particular days to do only one or the other.

If sand is not available or if teachers wish to add variety to sand play, the following materials can be used as substitutes for sand:

- sawdust,
- beans,
- rice, or
- large wood shavings.

A word of caution must be mentioned when using food as a play material. Many parents have strong feelings about wasting food. Therefore, parents' views should be solicited before using food as a substitute for sand.

The following props are suggested for use with sand or water or when the two are combined.

Props for Sand Play

muffin tins
cookie cutters
seashells
feathers
colanders
sifters
combs
shovels
molds
small car and trucks
dump trucks
sticks and seeds
rolling pins
rakes
whisk brooms

Props for Water Play

paintbrushes
spray bottles
food coloring
siphons
water wheels
boats
troughs
squeeze bottles
egg beaters
whisks
soap: liquid, solid, flaked
vegetable dyes
plastic straws
plastic tubing
eyedroppers
corks
sponges
bubble-blowing materials (paper, straws, solution, etc.)

Props for Both Sand and Water Play

clear marbles or magnifying glass
pebbles and rocks
string
funnels
pots and pans
buckets and bowls
scales
measuring cups
scoops
small containers
strainers of different sizes
ladles
sieves
nesting cups
pitchers

Clean-up for Sand & Water Play

Clean-up needs to be supervised daily. For health reasons, water cannot be allowed to stand overnight. All surfaces, including tables, tubs, and floors, need to be mopped regularly so that no one slides, trips, or falls. Children should be alerted to the following three basic rules of safety as well:

1. Water should not be squirted or splashed outside the tub, and sand should not be thrown.
2. Sand and water play should be limited to this one area.
3. Children must not run in this area.

By following these simple procedures, most teachers find that the sand and water area operates smoothly. Children love playing here. As this section has indicated, when the area is arranged to maximize their enjoyment, children can learn more.

More about sand and water play is suggested in the outdoor section of SHAPES.

CHAPTER 8

Rotation of Children through Learning Centers

Self-selectivity of learning centers is a basic child development curriculum practice. Preschool children select the center of interest as they start the Free Play time daily. The teacher designates how many children can be working in a center at a time. When a child chooses a center that is already filled to capacity, he is asked to make a second selection. Early childhood teachers use various tokens to facilitate the rotation of children from one learning center to another. He uses his token to denote his presence in a center. This procedure allows the child to be as self-directive as possible in choosing learning centers each day. Learning centers are the core to the child development curriculum.

Some advantages of rotation through centers include:

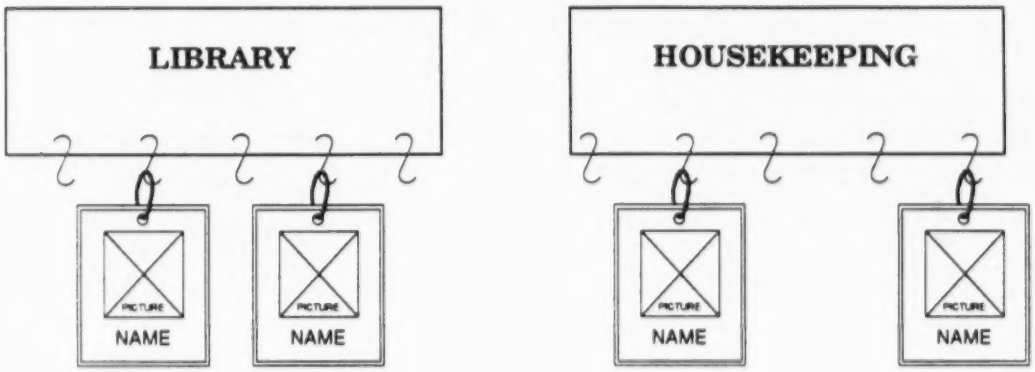
- child selection of activity;
- activities geared to child's developmental age;
- each child may be having an individual learning experience while the entire class is participating in structured curriculum;
- teacher knows what each child is doing and/or where each child is by token location; and
- teacher can guide children that prefer only one center.

In SHAPES: A Beginning Curriculum, a child's picture on a key chain was the author's suggested token to use in rotating around the learning centers during the Free Play period. However, many wonderful ideas have been thought of and used during the past few years to make the rotation through the various centers work best.

Examples of rotation methods are given in this section. You may already have a new idea in mind to use.

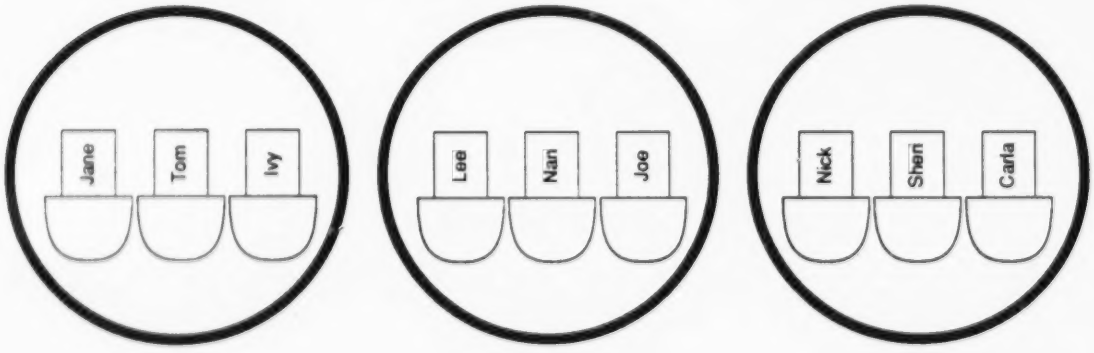
1. Photograph Placed in Plastic Key Chain

- Take a photograph of each child the first day of school.
- Insert photos in a clear plastic key chain picture holder.
- Place the number of hooks on the learning center sign interest board to correspond to the number of children to work (play) there at one time.
- Teach children how to choose learning center activities.
- Teach children how to move from one center to another when space opens.
- Always arrange the room so that there are more total learning center openings than children, thus allowing for smooth rotations.



2. Center Assignment

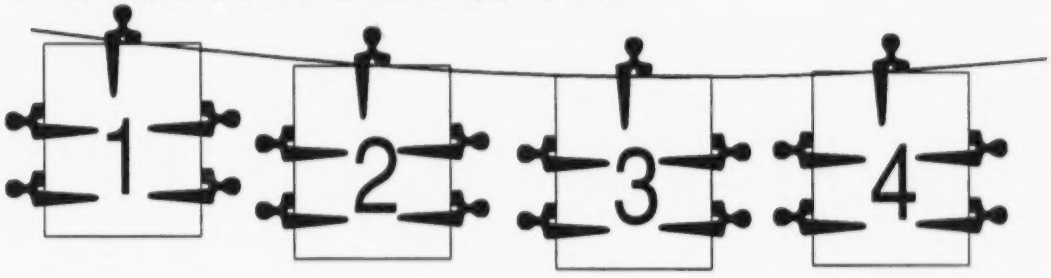
- Prepare a design for each center.
- Write the children's names on cards.
- Place the child's card in the pocket on the design of the center he chooses. Some teachers feel that they must assign centers at various times.



ART HOUSEKEEPING LIBRARY

3. Clothespin Center Assignment

- Assign each center a number. Write the number on a piece of heavy-duty paper.
- Hang a line across a low part of the room. Pin the sheets across the line.
- Print each child's name on a clothespin.
- Allow about four children in each center at a time.



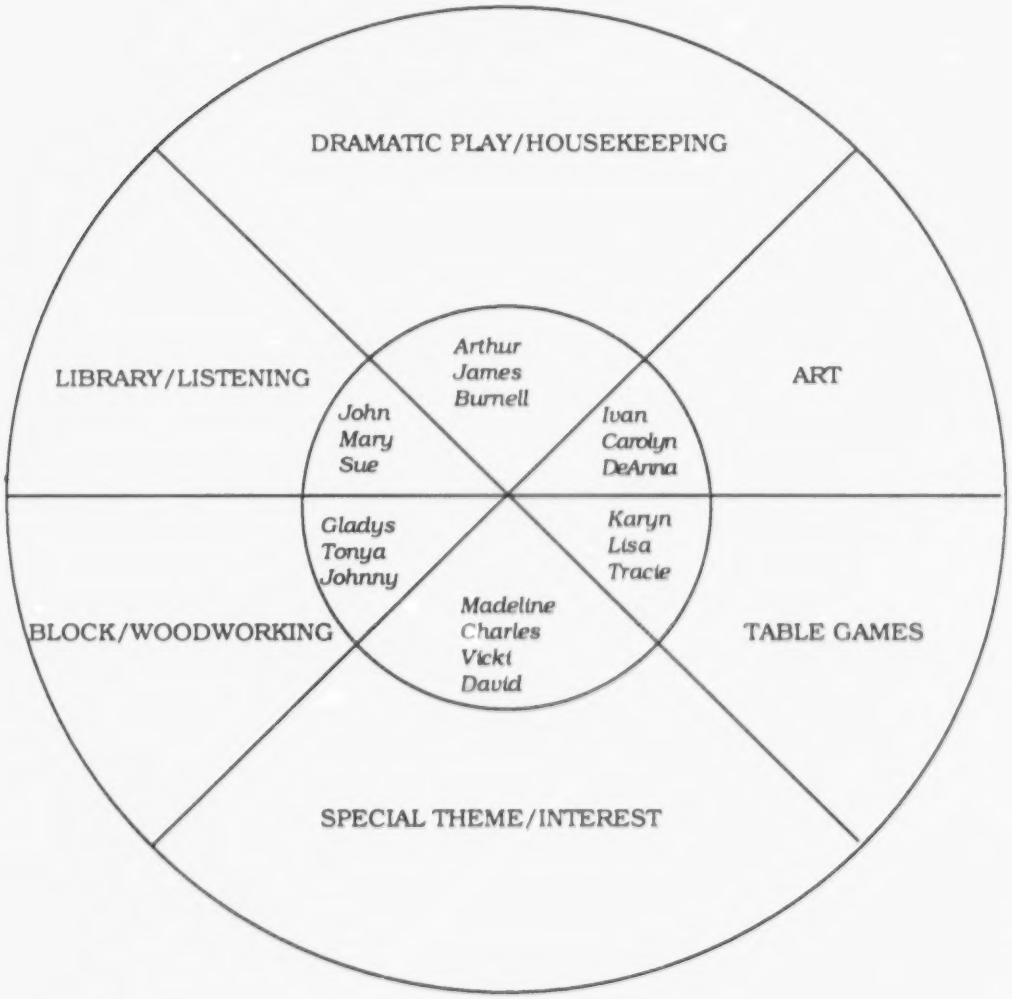
4. Today's Assignments

- Write the names of the centers on different colored strips of paper.
- Place a colored strip on each center to help the children identify them.
- Divide children equally to fit center space.
- Make sure each child experiences all centers within a week's time.

ART	WATER-PLAY	LIBRARY
Tony Juan Deanna Madeline	Charles Vicki Louise Juanita	Irme Maria Dorothy Gladys
BLOCK	**TABLE GAMES**	**HOUSEKEEPING**
Alfredo Cherlyn Lisa Terri Tracie	Ruby Micheal Susan William Terry	Joyce Shirley Tonya Thomas

5. Rotation Wheel

- Some teachers combine teacher assignment of centers with self-selection.
- Following are ideas that may be used to make this task a bit easier for the teacher when she makes the assignments.
- Make two circles. Connect with a brad. Rotate the inner circle to determine the center assignments.
- Any teacher-dominated choice method is less desirable, as children are assigned to centers rather than learning to make choices.



6. Stickers to Learning Centers

- A large board is placed where all can see. It has the sticker symbol each child wishes to be recognized by.
- Each child is given a large roll of stickers (keep them in a central place).
- As the children move from center to center, they choose a sticker for the entrance.
- Have Daily Sheets on the center entrance.
- This gives a daily talley showing where children are spending their time.

Sticker Symbols for Children to Rotate to Learning Centers

Toby	◉	Jeff	◉	Shannon	◉
Mary Jane	◉	Antonio	◉	Lynn	◉
Betty	◉	Jill	◉	Rebecca	◉
Sue	◉	Bob	◉	Hortesia	◉
Larry	◉	Betsy	◉	Michelle	◉
Bill	◉	Gilbert	◉	Stephanie	◉
Maria	◉	Arnoldo	◉		

CHAPTER 9

Information on Saving Dollars and Making Sense

In the preceding chapters, SHAPES has described the essential properties needed in creating working-learning centers. Certain additional efforts will contribute to the economical and educational efficiency of the centers. Consider the following suggestions to keep operaing costs down and environment quality high for your program.

Ways to Save Money When Furnishing and Maintaining Learning Centers

Self-Expressive Materials

- Avoid carpeted areas for messy activities.
- Store related clean-up materials in the same place; for example, keep sponges, detergent, and scrub brushes assembled in the fingerpainting bucket.
- Wash glue and paint brushes thoroughly, every time, store on end, wood tips down.
- Stack large sheets of paper on a series of narrow shelves rather than on one deep one for easy access; paper is heavy to lift.
- Store construction paper in closed cabinets to reduce fading.
- Sort donated materials as they arrive.
- Buy art materials in quantity whenever possible (test quality first: tempera paint varies a good deal, as does paper)
- Consider forming a purchasing co-op with other schools; bargain for discounts.

Wheel Toys

- Always store under cover.
- When possible, buy toys that do not require painting.
- Check nuts and bolts frequently; oil occasionally.
- In the long run, it pays to buy the expensive preschool grade quality of this equipment; check warranties.

Outdoor Equipment (swings and slides)

- Avoid buying painted equipment; if you have it, sand, prime, and paint it regularly.
- Repair instantly, for safety's sake and to discourage further abuse.
- Wooden jungle gyms placed on grass or dirt rot quickly.
- Inspect rigorously for safety.
- Purchase removable, fiber swing seats with extra hooks.
- If affordable, rubber matting under such equipment is wonderful.

Hollow Blocks, Boards, Sawhorses, and Boxes

- These should be lacquered with a product such as Deft every year.
- Use only on grass or carpet to prevent splintering (indoor-outdoor carpeting or artificial turf can be used for this purpose when the entire play area is paved).
- Some brands of large plastic blocks are reported to bow in or out, or to be too slippery for climbing or stacking.
- Store molded plastic items in a warm place and wooden equipment in a dry place.

Animal Cages

- Bottoms of raised cages should be made of mesh to be self-cleaning. No animal should have to live in squalor.
- Outdoor cages require shade, wind protection, and ventilation.
- Protect from vandals by keeping cages carefully mended and using quality padlocks.

Floors

- Use linoleum as the basic surface (carpeting is impossible to keep clean in eating or art areas), but provide carpeted spaces where possible. (Keep carpets away from outdoor entries.)
- Carpeting adds warmth, comfort, noise control, and "softness" to the room; tightly woven ones are best for easy vacuuming. Small area rugs that can be shaken out and moved easily are nice if nonskid mats are used underneath.
- An old-fashioned carpet sweeper is very handy for quick rug clean-up.
- String mops are more effective than sponge mops to use after water play.
- A drain in the bathroom floor facilitates frequent cleaning and disinfecting; it makes indoor water play more welcome.

Files (picture, poetry, flannel boards, songs)

- Mount them on stiff cardboard or mat board (rubber cement is the most satisfactory adhesive).
- Spray with clear, flat, acrylic spray.
- File under topic headings for easy identification.
- These files serve as invaluable educational resources and cost relatively little.

Books

- Purchase durable, "library grade" bindings to start with or cover with clear contact paper.
- Repair books promptly with mending tape.
- Teach children to handle books with loving care.
- Add variety by putting some books away for use another day.
- Keep books sorted according to some simple classification system to help find that "special" book when needed.

Furniture

- Buy varnished or lacquered shelves, cabinets, and other simple furniture, rather than painted furniture. The natural finish requires less maintenance.
- Look for easily cleaned plastic surfaces on tabletops and chairs. Chairs, in particular, soil easily, so purchase ones that will hold up under frequent washing and do not require repainting; ones with plastic backs and seats are good choices.
- Check all furniture regularly to make certain that nuts and bolts are tight.
- Wax all wood and plastic furniture with paste wax before using initially and after washing to cut work and save surfaces. (Children like to help polish.)
- Buy furniture with casters whenever possible to aid movement. Avoid "built-ins" when you can; they reduce flexibility.
- Scratched and marred surfaces can be recovered with plastic similar to Formica, which can be cut with scissors and glued with a special adhesive.
- Buy good quality, substantial items or have them made; buying quality furnishings saves money in the long run.
- Hunt thrift shops and rummage sales for low dressers, shelves, and other furniture and fixtures. Bargain shopping makes the money go further.

Unit Blocks

- Wax with paste wax before use.
- It is occasionally necessary to wash really dirty blocks. Do **not** soak. Dry immediately to avoid roughening and raising grain.
- Stack on shelves according to kind; never dump in bins.
- Use on flat, "tight" carpeting, which deadens noise, provides warmth for sitting children, and protects corners of the blocks.
- Might use homemade, soft wood blocks as money stretchers. They don't wear well but will do in a pinch, as will sealed and stapled milk cartons if money is really tight. Be sure you provide a lot of them.

Tabletop Activity Materials

- Mend broken corners of storage boxes immediately.
- Have a special, centrally located little pot or box, and drop stray bits and pieces into it for weekly sorting; include nuts and bolts, Tinker Toys, puzzles knobs, etc.
- Label puzzle pieces with individual symbols on back for rapid sorting and reassembly.
- Teach children to keep small, many-pieced items on the table; don't permit these to scatter. Using carpet squares, one per child, helps keep an activity focused in one place.
- Count pieces of some items before setting out, mark quantities on box, and recount before putting away (for example, doctor's kit and simple games).
- Protect teacher-made activities with acrylic spray or contact paper.
- Inspect all items regularly for cleanliness, and wash when necessary.
- Store in see-through plastic whenever possible.
- Presenting some items, such as colored bears, pegs, and cubical counting blocks, in a shallow basket makes them readily visible and appealing.
- When cardboard boxes are used for storage, draw a picture on the side or top so children can "read" what's inside.

Tools (cooking, woodworking, gardening)

- Keep tools out of the weather and keep them oiled and painted when necessary.
- Teach children to use them for their intended purpose; don't discourage experimentation but don't permit destructive abuse.
- Purchase sturdy equipment that really works.
- Store tools of all kinds with care; don't just dump in a box.

Tips to Keep Learning Centers Interesting and Attractive

The following general recommendations may apply to any or all learning centers described in *Environments*.

- Change activities in each learning center weekly to match the children's progress.
- Adopt a new theme each week to be demonstrated in the special center or throughout others.
- Equip the housekeeping and dramatic play area like a playhouse.

- Add selected items to the housekeeping area to depict the theme (e.g., Halloween decoration).
- Keep the library center in a quiet part of the room.
- Use pillows or carpet to make a "soft spot."
- Use the area for telling stories, performing fingerplays and talking with puppets.
- Include a "quiet place" where a child can be alone, yet supervised (e.g., a loft, a tepee, or another cubby).
- Remember, the block center needs plenty of room and is noisy, so put it next to the housekeeping area.
- Always have the easel ready and available in the art center.
- Plan a new art project for each day.
- The art center can double for a music center.
- Promote table toys that concentrate on eye-hand coordination and other manipulative skills.
- Homemade games and toys are great for learning color, shape, number, size, and letters.
- The special center or the sand and water play can double for science center or math center.
- Sand and water play can be outside, and science or math can be inside.
- Feel free to collapse centers and replace or add new ones.
- If space allows, have more centers.

Pleasing Parents and Evaluators

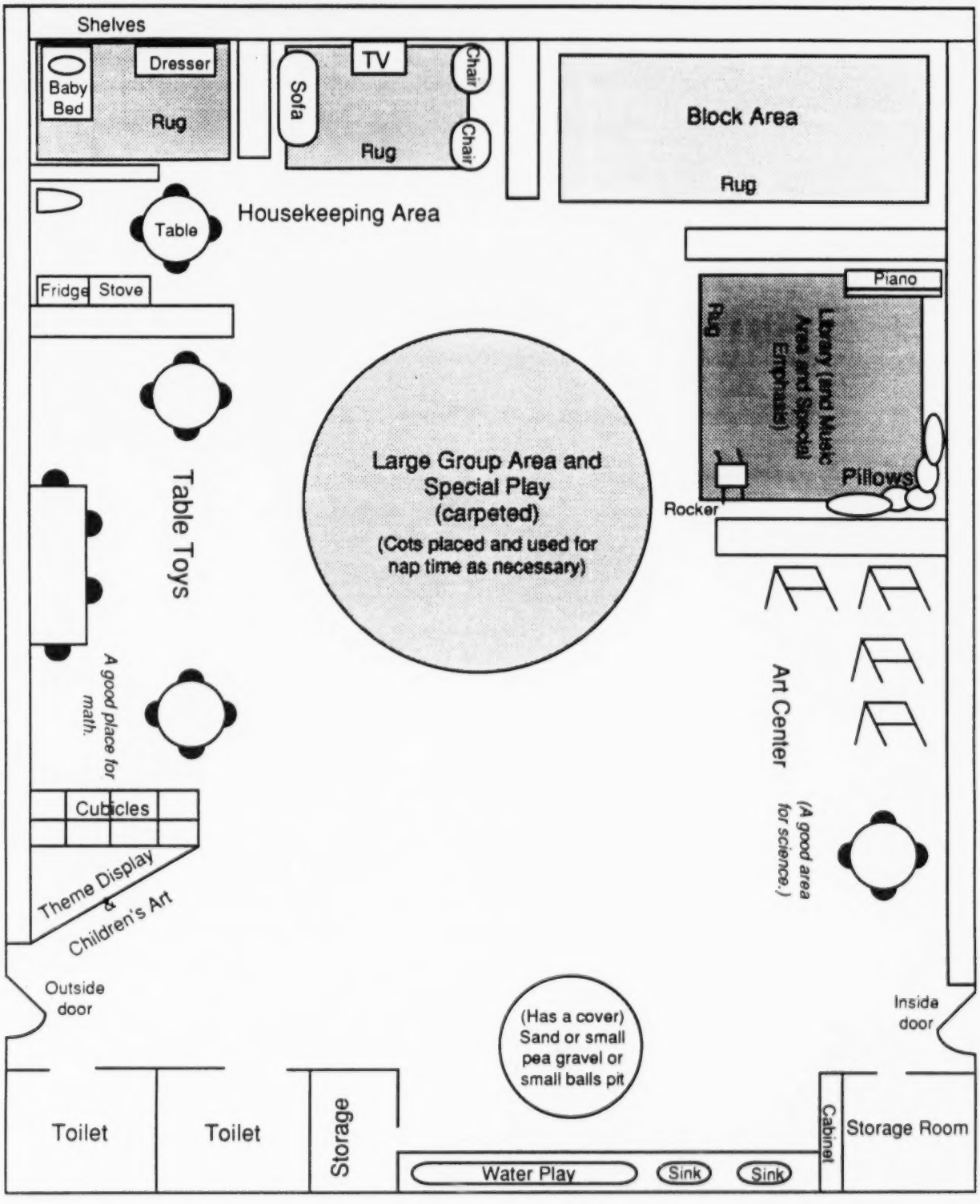
Visual appeal is very important in planning how to arrange your equipment and cover your walls. Remember, a day-care center can easily look too crowded -- although it may house excellent equipment and deliver a superior program. The secret to success in achieving an enviable ambiance is to concentrate on a color scheme that can unify each room. Always remember that what a child sees and what the adult observes while standing represent two different viewpoints. Children's art work should definitely be displayed at child height. This is another reason for creating an interest area for theme development. You will want something artistic to extend to the adult viewpoint for the benefit of your visitors. Keeping to soft-colored walls exposed much of the way to the ceiling gives an optical illusion of neatness. A small portion of this space can be used for learning center labels (e.g., Art Center). With some creative use of symbols or lettering, the labels can often be worked into the general decor without creating "wall clutter."

Changing theme displays, upgrading and changing learning centers and displaying new children's art frequently can assure your supervisor, visitors, and children you are committed to providing an environment where children can grow successfully.

Some Floor Plan Ideas

Having excessive space in a day-care center is a real luxury in designing the floor plans. On the next few pages are samples of floor plans for centers having ample room as well as for centers having less space.

SHAPES CLASSROOM SUGGESTION



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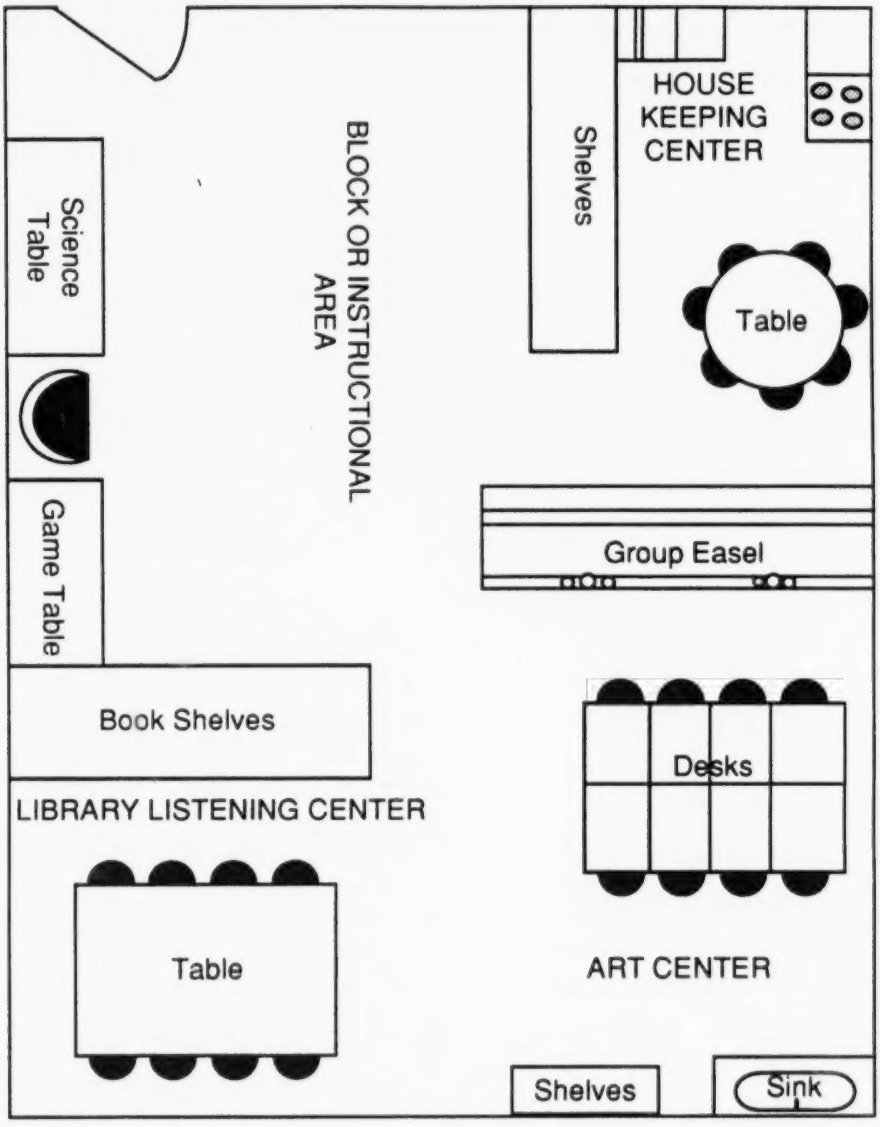

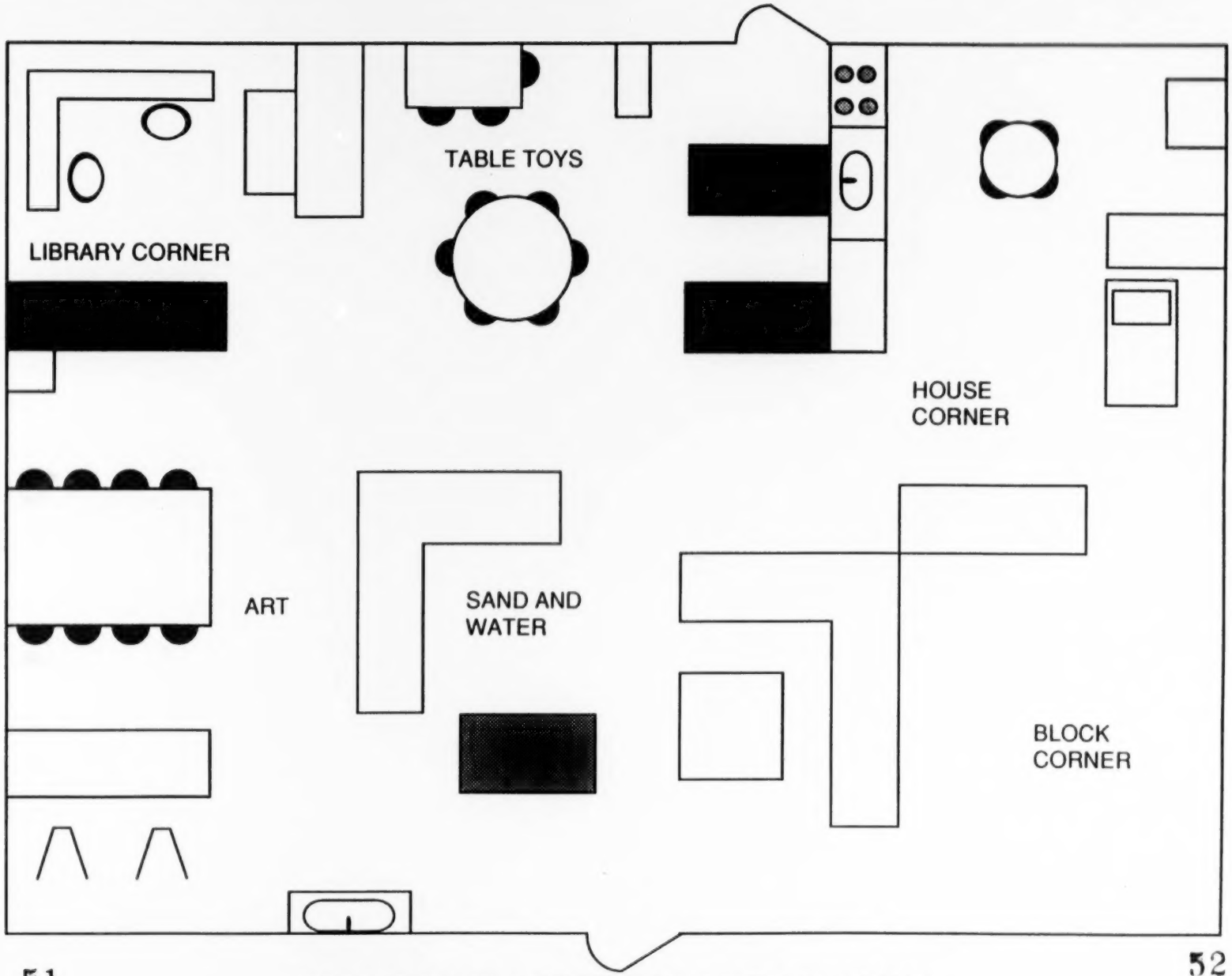

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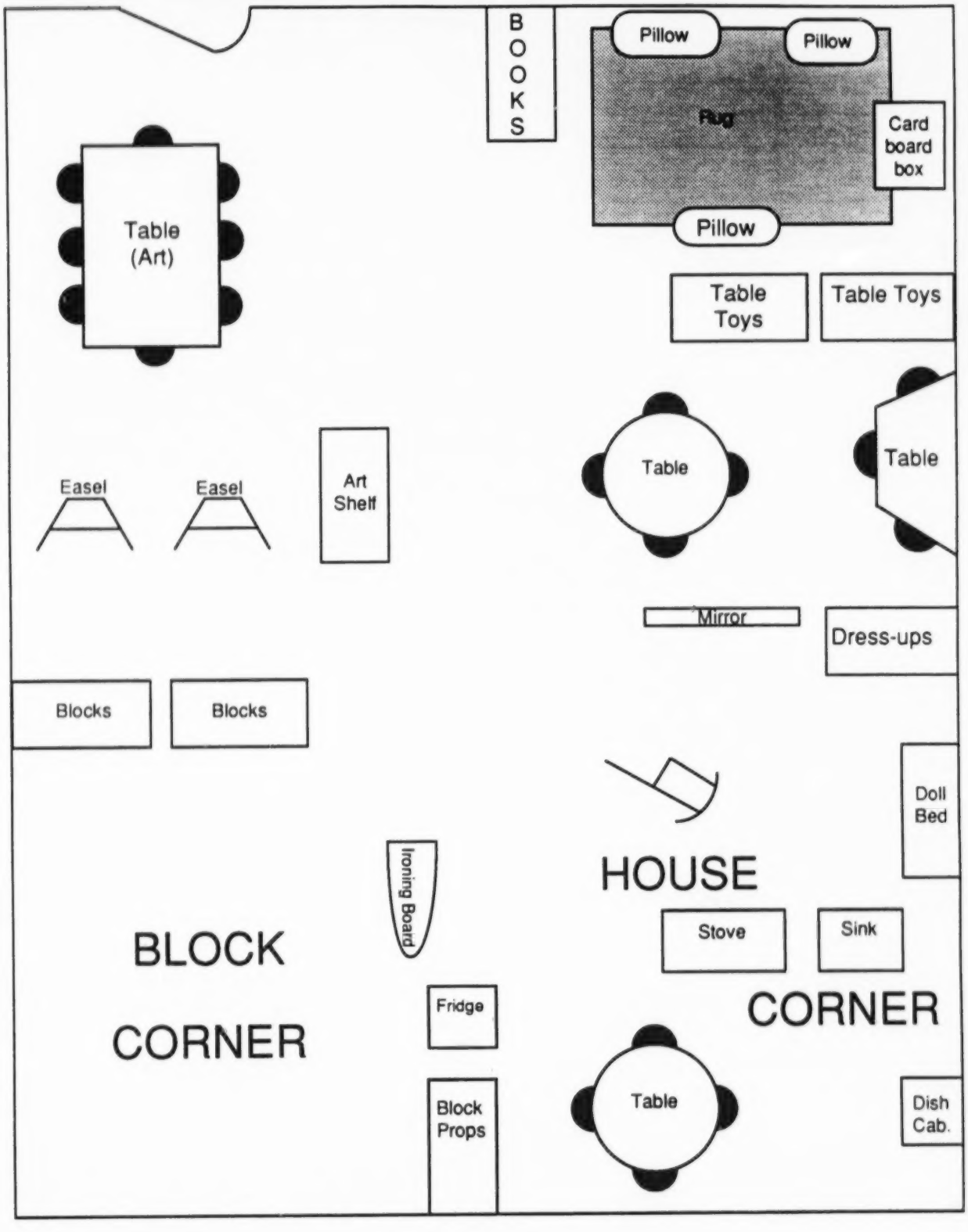


CHAPTER 10

Why Not Improve Your Playground?

The outside playground makes the all-important first impression on visitors to your day care center! As it is the most visible area to these people, you may want to make improvements. The outdoor play area is as valuable and important as the indoor area to plan and arrange wisely.

It is extremely important that teachers understand that the outdoors offers equal developmental opportunities for the total child. Many outdoor playgrounds appear to have only one common goal: large muscle development. Therefore, in addition to swings, sandboxes, slides, and wheeled toys, outdoor areas should also contain gardens, animals, and places for water and mud. The daily opportunities for preschool children to play and experiment freely in water and mud in the Scandinavian countries and Japan is very impressive. Outdoor water and mud play is developed most appropriately where (1) teachers and children are dressed in clothes for water play; (2) teachers encourage activity in the water and mud and take part in it; and (3) a washer and dryer, shower and dressing room are a part of the center. Parents are instructed to provide the one outdoor play suit that is needed. For anyone who has observed the difference between children having and those not having this important play opportunity, there is no doubt that children gain from the wonderful play experience with water and mud.

Opportunities for pretend play can be especially rich outdoors if a plentiful supply of sturdy boxes, boards, and ladders are available. Science activities, particularly those in natural science and physics, fit in well outside if equipment such as water, pulleys, ropes, and living materials are included in the environment. Water and sand play is always a favorite activity. The array of props and accessories as suggested for indoor water play serve nicely outdoors. (See pp. 25-27 *Environments*.) Also, many art activities, such as finger painting, are better suited to the more easily cleaned and less restrictive outdoor area. A woodworking and carpentry center should be included in the plan.

Many of the principles mentioned in regard to indoor planning apply equally to outdoor activities. The same need for children to rotate to different areas exists. Planning to prevent congestion by dispersing interest areas throughout the yard is also valuable. Another good idea is to place activities near their storage units. Consider uses of shaded areas and the diversity of surfacing materials, as applicable.

Surfaces in the simplest of playgrounds should provide for safe play.

- A hard surface, such as blacktop, is required for simple games, ball handling, tricycle lanes, and a traffic safety village. Ground markings can be painted in the shape of circles, squares, animals or whatever else might be functional or in accordance with the theme. Surface markings allow for the teaching of hopscotch and other great games. Children can use lines for walking beams and other symbols for obstacle courses. (A hard, resilient, rubber surfacing material is preferred, but it is expensive.)
- A grassy surface, preferably with both flat areas for organized games, and slopes for children to run up and down is ideal.

The fence should be high, sturdy, difficult to climb, and have gates that can be locked. This will give peace of mind to both caregivers and parents.

To make a playground safe, be sure to check daily for:

- loose bolts,
- jagged edges,
- protruding nails,
- splintering,
- wobbly connections,
- broken pieces,
- ant beds, snakes, and other dangerous creatures,
- trash,
- branches, and
- trash.

It is best to look for hazards **before** children enter the area.

Provide fall zones consisting of sand, pea gravel, bark, or other resilient material under and around equipment. This ground cover must be kept loose and soft, evenly distributed, and free of broken glass and other litter at all times. It should be 6-8 inches deep to be effective as a fall zone around and under climbing.

Playground safety may be improved by using the Playground Maintenance Checklist (Frost 1986) on the next page and by viewing the video "Playground Safety," available from Texas Department of Human Resources.

Playground Maintenance Checklist

Instructions: Check the playground at least once each month. Train all personnel to be alert to playground hazards, and report them promptly. Avoid the use of hazardous equipment until repaired.	Date Checked	Is Repair Needed?	Date Repaired
1. Is there an 8- to 10-inch deep ground cover (sand, pea gravel, shredded wood) under all swings, merry-go-rounds, slides, and climbing equipment? Is the resilient surface compacted or out of place? If concrete or asphalt is under equipment, is the manufactured impact attenuation product in place?			
2. Are there foreign objects or obstructions in the fall zones under and around fixed equipment?			
3. Are there obstructions to interfere with normal play activity?			
4. Are there climbing areas that would allow children to fall more than their reaching height when standing erect?			
5. Are concrete supports sticking above the ground? Are they secure?			
6. Are there sharp edges, broken parts, pinching actions, or loose bolts?			
7. Are there openings that could trap a child's head? Openings 4 1/2 to 8 inches wide should be avoided.			
8. Are there frayed cables, worn ropes, open hooks, or chains that could pinch?			
9. Are timbers rotting, splitting, termite-infested, or excessively worn?			
10. Are portable toys such as tricycles and wagons in good repair?			
11. Are there protrusions that can catch clothing? Protusions can include posts, bolts, and similar structures.			
12. Are there crush points or shearing actions such as hinges of seesaws and undercarriages of revolving equipment?			
13. Is the fence at least 4-foot high and in good repair? Can gates be securely fastened?			
14. Are there electrical hazards on the playground such as accessible air conditioners, switch boxes, or power lines?			
15. Are there collections of contaminated water on the playground?			
16. Are there toxic materials on the playground?			
17. Do the grass, trees, and shrubs need care?			
18. Do children wear inappropriate clothing such as capes on climbing and moving equipment?			
19. Does the adult-to-child supervision ratio equal ratios required for indoor activities?			

Developed by Dr. Joe Frost, The University of Texas at Austin, to accompany the videotape "Playground Safety," available from the Texas Department of Human Services.

Adjusting for Weather and Personal Considerations

Colder temperatures restrict outdoor school activities in the winter months. The northern part of the state produces a wide range of sometimes rapidly changing weather conditions, which can provide an appealing variety of activities. Children and teachers must plan to dress warmly to take advantage of outdoor play on cold days.

A covered area is a terrific asset to the playground design. On bad days, it allows for children to spend some outside time to release built-up energy. It also provides shade for those hot and dry days. Trees lend beauty to the landscape and make perfect spots for storytelling and other group listening and singing activities.

After vigorous outdoor play, children require drinking water. Ideally, a child-sized drinking fountain should be available; it will eliminate the need for thermos containers and individual cups.

Toilets should be accessible from inside and outside of the building (see SHAPES Floor Plans). Directors should consider the layout of the building and playground, safety features, the children's development level and need for supervision, and the staffing pattern, in determining procedures for allowing children to leave the playground for restroom needs.

Playground Equipment

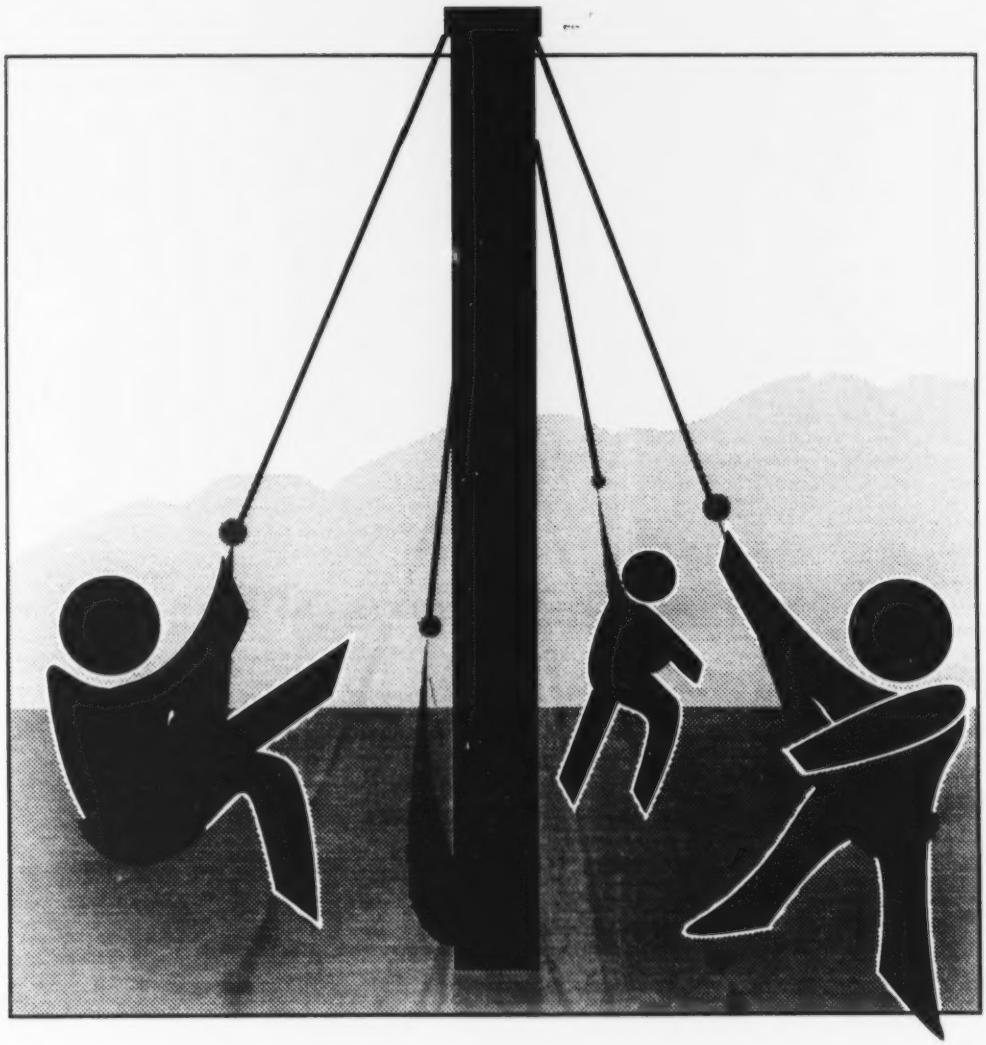
In designing playgrounds, there is a large array of versatile equipment that can be built by parents, volunteers or professional carpenters. Many such items can be purchased from outdoor play equipment vendors throughout the United States. Playground architects are available to design and oversee construction if resources allow.

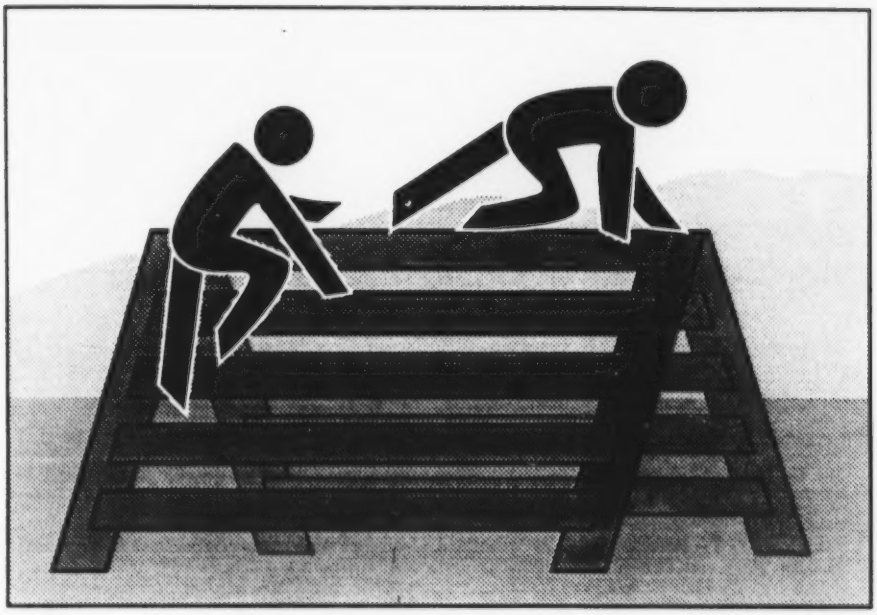
Researchers have noted the tendency for playground planners to suggest the purchase of "simple" units (e.g., swings). This kind of equipment is limited in play value because only a few children can be occupied at one time and the length of time these children can be kept occupied is relatively short. On the other hand, "complex units" with subparts for climbing, sliding, walking and swinging, and with lookouts and bridges, offer a variety of play possibilities.

Less expensive, very safe, and durable equipment items such as tractor tires, railroad ties or short, broad tree stumps can become major components in sand and other play areas.

On the next few pages are drawings illustrating playground equipment and outdoor play activities that encourage children's social, emotional, cognitive and physical growth.

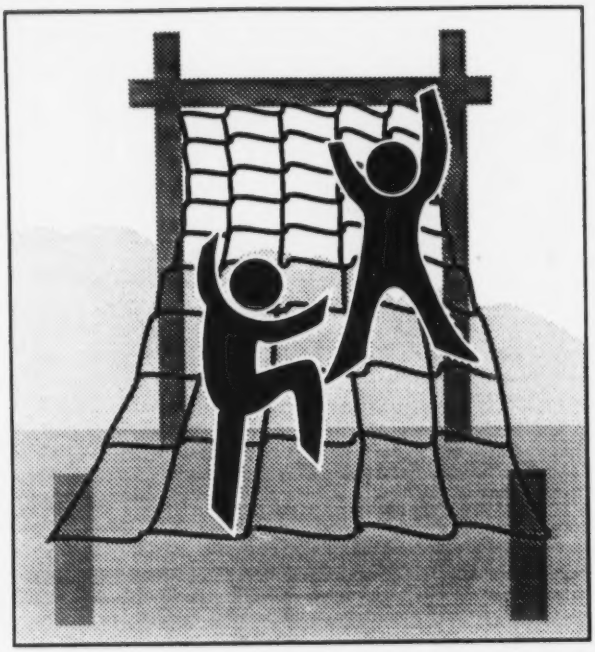
Playground Equipment
&
Outdoor Play Activities





Climbing frames provide for
lots of exercise and fun.

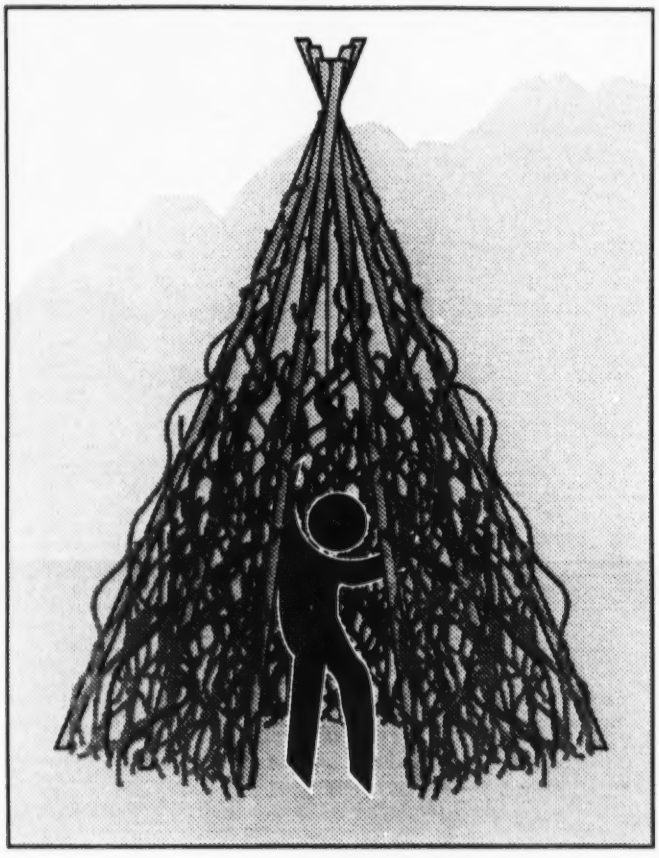
A ladder can become a look-out tower or a tall tree.



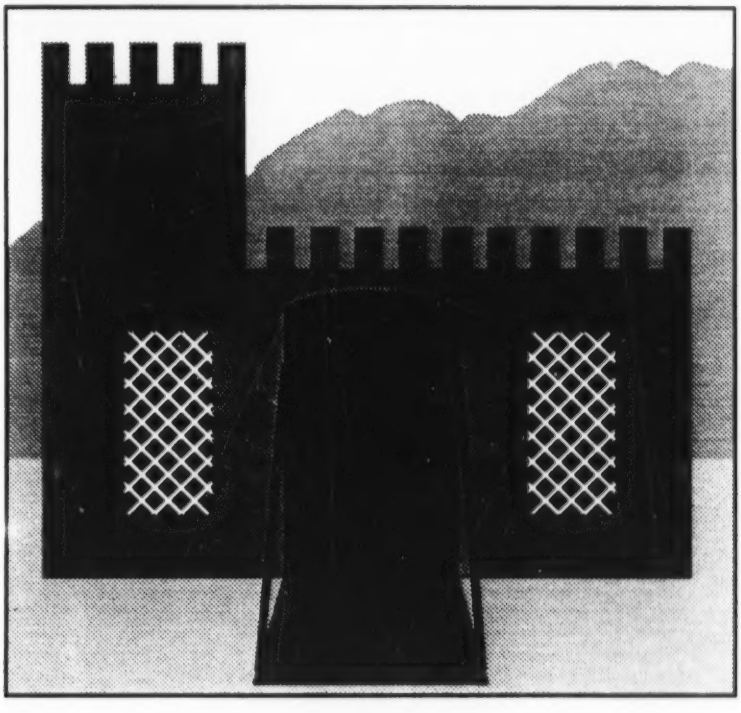
A rope ladder promotes arm and leg strength and agility in climbing.

A gym mat provides a safe tumbling area.

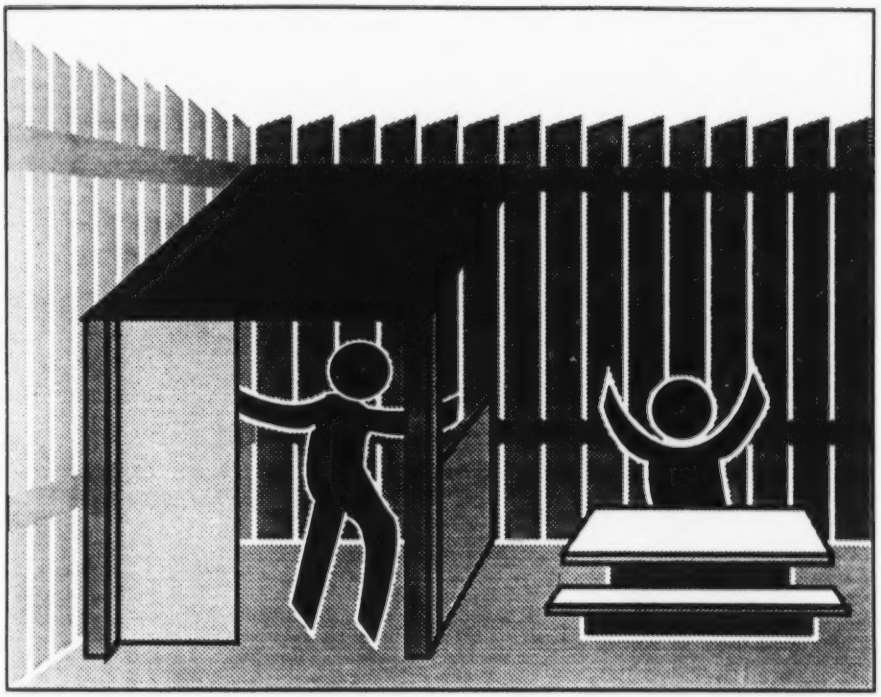
A multi-level deck can become a ship, an award platform, or a stage.



Grow an ivy or string-bean tepee to provide a quiet, shady hideaway.



A castle, or other real-life structure, stimulates imaginative play.

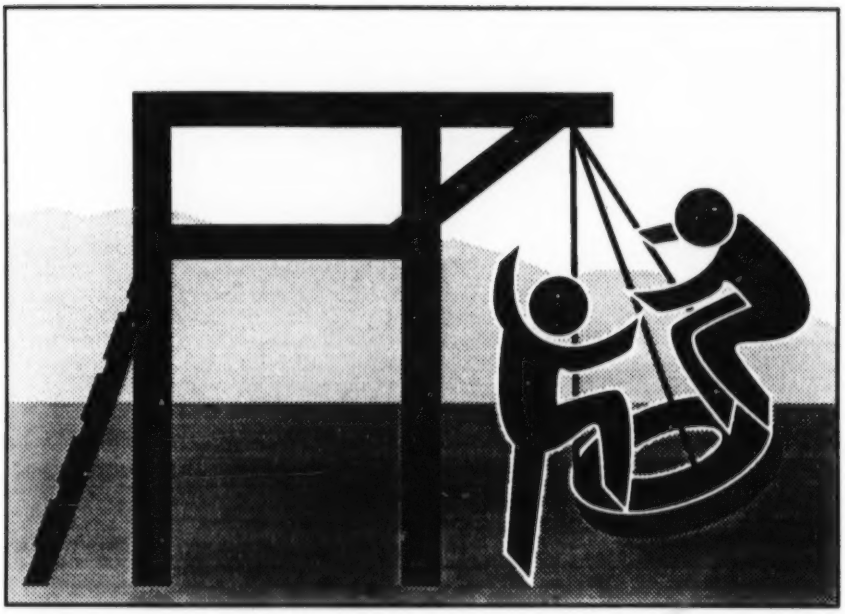


Utilize permanent structures, such as a fence, to create a dramatic play area.

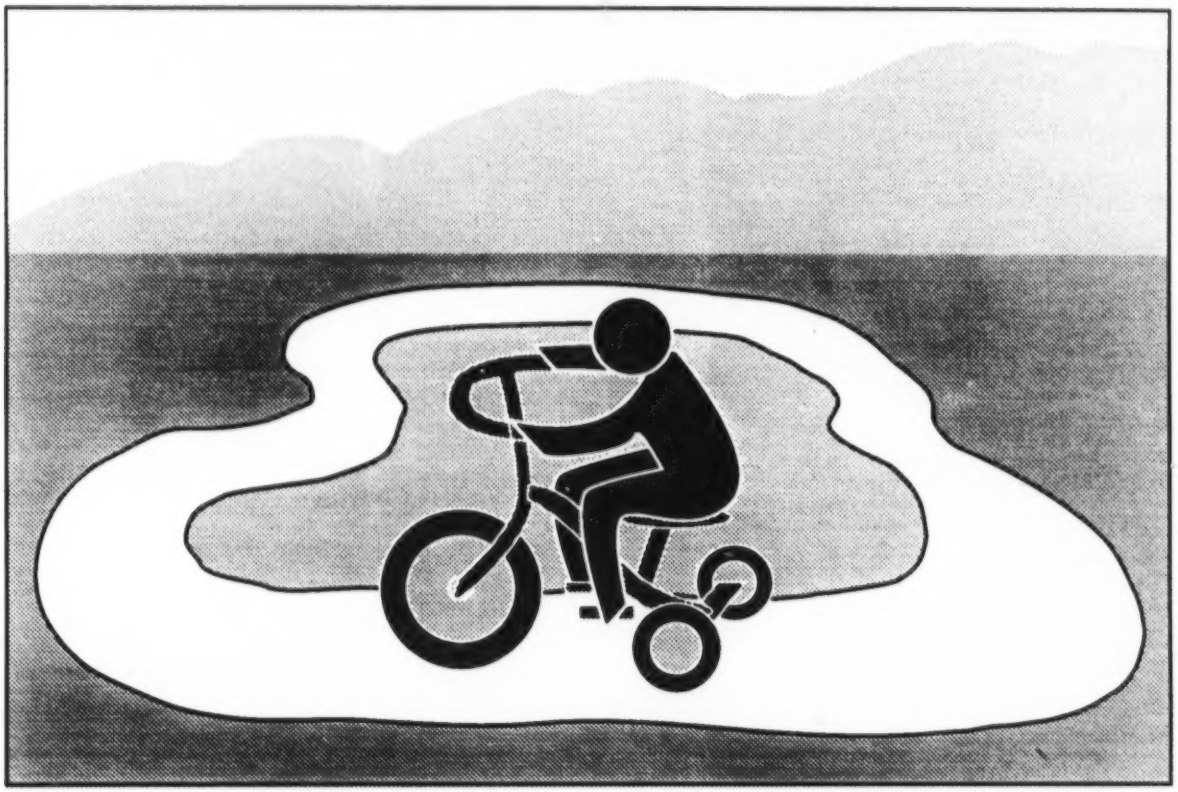
Many children are developing large muscles as they have fun at play.

Outdoor games and activities stimulate cognitive development in children.

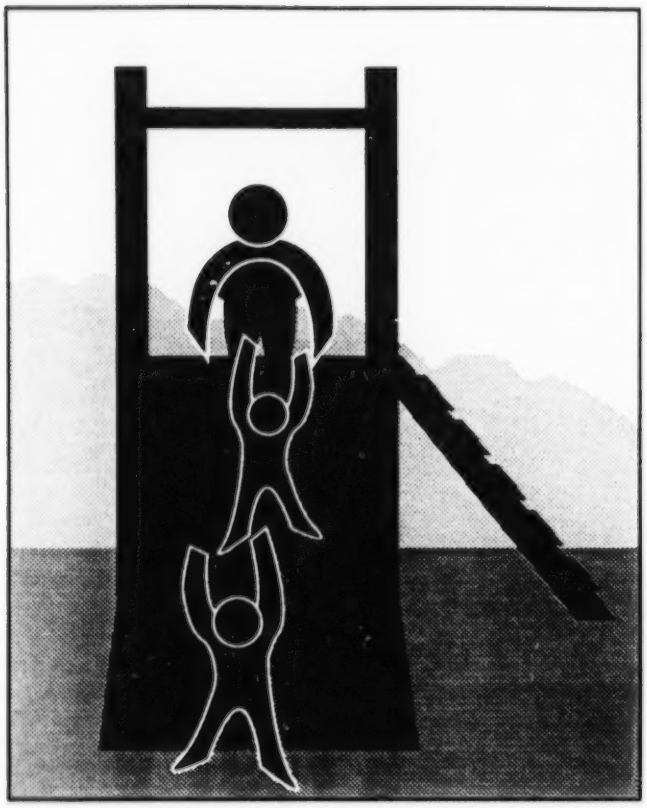
Reuse old or discarded tires.
They can give tireless children hours of safe and constructive play.



A tire swing offers an opportunity for cooperative play.



Riding paths have multiple benefits in child development.

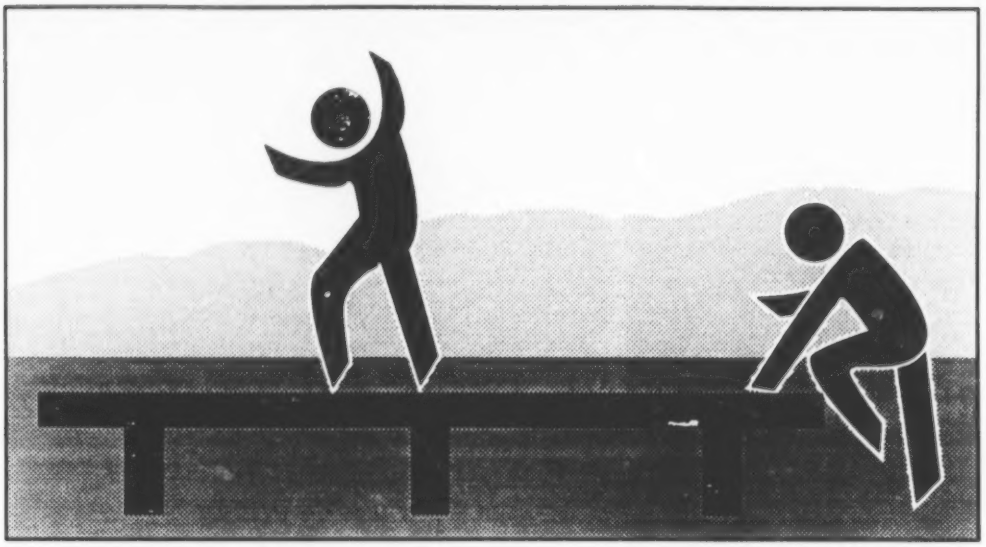


Appropriately scaled slides promote self-confidence in preschool children.

Children enjoy the rocking, swaying, spinning motion of all kinds of swings. Here a tire serves.

Sand and water play offers the best in early childhood practices.

Children improve their balance and their self-confidence on a balance beam of appropriate width and height.



Climbing and swinging help strengthen large and small muscles.